



Leaving Congress: House of Representatives and Senate Departures Data Since 1989

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Summary

Members of Congress leave the House or Senate for a variety of reasons; these may include resignation, death, or chamber action during a Congress, and retirement, electoral defeat, or pursuit of another office at the end of a Congress. In the 101st Congress (1989-1990) through September 2010 of the 111th Congress (2009-2010), on average, two Senators and eight Members of the House of Representatives have left before the conclusion of a Congress. Over the same period, on average, 10 Senators and 55 Members of the House left Congress upon expiration of their terms of office. These figures include those Members who have announced an intention to retire at the completion of the 111th Congress.

The data provided here may offer insight concerning the turnover of membership in each chamber, but any such conclusions should be drawn with care, as there appears to be no pattern to Member departures. This may be due in part to the individualized nature of congressional careers, which might include numerous events or actions that could affect Members' decisions to end their congressional service.

This report will be updated at the conclusion of the 111th Congress. Detailed information regarding 111th Congress departures is available at http://crs.gov/resources/Pages/Congress_111_departures.aspx.

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In each Congress, Members leave the House or Senate for a variety of reasons. In the course of a Congress, reasons could include resignation, death, or chamber action. At the conclusion of a Congress, Members depart due to retirement, electoral defeat, or pursuit of another office. Since the 101st Congress (1989-1990), on average, two Senators and eight Members of the House of Representatives¹ have left before the conclusion of a Congress. On average, 10 Senators (10% of Senate membership)² and 55 (12.4% of House membership) Members of the House have left Congress upon expiration of their terms of office.³

This report provides data on Members who have left Congress since 1989. Data are divided into two broad categories. The first category, “in-term” departures, addresses Members who leave prior to the conclusion of a Congress. Circumstances of in-term departures include a Member’s resignation or death, or the action of a chamber regarding a Member’s status.⁴ The second category, “complete-term” departures, includes Members who leave the House or Senate at the completion of their terms. This includes Members who retired, were defeated for reelection, or who did not run for reelection to the House or Senate because they sought other elective office. **Table 1** provides departure information for the House since the 101st Congress (1989-1990). **Table 2** provides House complete-term departures as a percentage of chamber membership for the same period. **Table 3** and **Table 4** provide Senate departure information, and complete-term departures as a percentage of chamber membership, respectively, since the 101st Congress. Detailed information regarding 111th Congress departures is available at http://crs.gov/resources/Pages/Congress_111_departures.aspx.

Table 1. House of Representatives Departures Data, 101st-111th Congresses

Congress, Years	In-Term	Resigned	Died	Completed Term	Retired	Defeated	Other Office
101 st (1989-1990)	9	6	3	40	15	14	11
102 nd (1991-1992)	9	6	3	108	50	46	12
103 rd (1993-1994)	9	6	3	82	27	39	16
104 th (1995-1996)	9	8	1	66	32	25	9
105 th (1997-1998)	10	6	4	40	22	9	9
106 th (1999-2000)	4	1	3	39	20	11	8
107 th (2001-2002)	10 ^a	5	4	50	22	17	11
108 th (2003-2004)	6	6	0	35	17	9	9
109 th (2005-2006)	6	6	0	49	14	26	9
110 th (2007-2008)	13	6	7	51	24	22	5
111 th (2009-2010) ^b	2	9	2	40	19	7	14
Average	8	6	3	55	24	20	10

¹ Data include Representatives, Delegates, and the Resident Commissioner.

² In some instances, Senators were appointed to fill a Senate vacancy, and did not stand for election to a full term. In this report, those Senators are counted as retiring.

³ These statistics include Members who have announced their intention to retire at the conclusion of the 111th Congress.

⁴ In one instance since 1989, a Member was expelled from the House pursuant to H.Res. 495, 107th Congress, adopted on July 24, 2002.

Source: Congressional Biographical Directory, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp>, and CRS calculations.

Notes: 111th Congress data are current through September 8, 2010. Averages are rounded to the whole number; in-term and completed term averages may not equal the averages of their subcategories.

- a. Includes one Member who was expelled from the House pursuant to H.Res. 495, 107th Congress, adopted on July 24, 2002.
- b. Through September 8, 2010.

Table 2. House of Representatives Completed Term Departure Percentages

Congress, Years	Completed Term	Retired	Defeated	Other Office
101 st (1989-1990)	9.1%	3.4%	3.2%	2.5%
102 nd (1991-1992)	24.5%	11.4%	10.5%	2.7%
103 rd (1993-1994)	18.6%	6.1%	8.9%	3.6%
104 th (1995-1996)	15.0%	7.3%	5.7%	2.1%
105 th (1997-1998)	9.1%	5.0%	2.1%	2.1%
106 th (1999-2000)	8.9%	4.6%	2.5%	1.8%
107 th (2001-2002)	11.4%	5.0%	3.9%	2.5%
108 th (2003-2004)	8.0%	3.9%	2.1%	2.1%
109 th (2005-2006)	11.1%	3.2%	5.9%	2.1%
110 th (2007-2008)	11.6%	5.5%	5.0%	1.1%
111 th (2009-2010) ^a	9.1%	4.3%	1.6%	3.2%
Average	12.4%	5.4%	4.7%	2.3%

Source: Congressional Biographical Directory, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp>, and CRS calculations.

Notes: 111th Congress data is current through September 8, 2010. Percentages are based on 440 House Members in 101st-110th Congresses, and 441 Members (435 Representatives, 5 Delegates, and Resident Commissioner) in the 111th Congress.

- a. Through September 8, 2010.

Table 3. Senate Departures Data, 101st-111th Congresses

Congress, Years	In-Term	Resigned	Died	Completed Term				Other Office
				Completed	Retired	Defeated		
101 st (1989-1990)	2	1	1	3	2	1	0	
102 nd (1991-1992)	4	2	2	13	6	5	2	
103 rd (1993-1994)	3	3	0	12	8	3	1	
104 th (1995-1996)	2	2	0	15	12	2	1	
105 th (1997-1998)	0	0	0	8	5	3	0	
106 th (1999-2000)	2	0	2	11	5	6	0	
107 th (2001-2002)	2	1	1	7	4	3	0	
108 th (2003-2004)	0	0	0	9	7	1	1	

Congress, Years	In-Term	Resigned	Died	Completed Term		Retired	Defeated	Other Office
				13	4			
109 th (2005-2006)	1	1	0	13	4	9	0	
110 th (2007-2008)	2	1	1	8	5	3	0	
111 th (2009-2010) ^a	7	5	2	16	12	3	1	
Average	2	1	1	10	6	4	1	

Source: Congressional Biographical Directory, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp>, and CRS calculations.

Notes: 111th Congress data are current through September 18, 2010. Averages are rounded to the whole number; in-term and completed term averages may not equal the averages of their subcategories.

a. Through September 18, 2010.

Table 4. Senate Completed Terms Departure Percentages

Congress, Years	Completed Term		Retired	Defeated	Other Office
	Term	Completed			
101 st (1989-1990)	3%	2%	1%	0%	
102 nd (1991-1992)	13%	6%	5%	2%	
103 rd (1993-1994)	12%	8%	3%	1%	
104 th (1995-1996)	15%	12%	2%	1%	
105 th (1997-1998)	8%	5%	3%	0%	
106 th (1999-2000)	11%	5%	6%	0%	
107 th (2001-2002)	7%	4%	3%	0%	
108 th (2003-2004)	9%	7%	1%	1%	
109 th (2005-2006)	13%	4%	9%	0%	
110 th (2007-2008)	8%	5%	3%	0%	
111 th (2009-2010) ^a	16%	12%	3%	1%	
Average	10%	6%	4%	1%	

Source: Congressional Biographical Directory, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp>, and CRS calculations.

Notes: 111th Congress data are current through September 18, 2010. Averages are rounded to the whole number; in-term and completed term averages may not equal the averages of their subcategories.

a. Through September 18, 2010.

The data provided in this report offer insight into the means by which Members of Congress leave the House or Senate, and offer preliminary insight about some of the factors that may influence the turnover of membership in each chamber. At the same time, any conclusions based on these data should be drawn with care, since there do not appear to be patterns to Member departures. This may be due in part to the individualized nature of congressional careers, which might include numerous events or actions that could affect Members' decisions to end their congressional service.

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